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## States look for solutions as U.S. fentanyl deaths keep rising

By GEOFF MULVIHILL  
Associated Press

As the addiction and overdose crisis that has gripped the U.S. for two decades turns even deadlier, state governments are scrambling for ways to stem the destruction wrought by fentanyl and other synthetic opioids.

In statehouses across the country, lawmakers have been considering and adopting laws on two fronts: reducing the risk to users and increasing the penalties for dealing fentanyl or mixing it with other drugs. Meanwhile, Republican state attorneys general are calling for more federal action, while some GOP governors are deploying National Guard units with a mission that includes stopping the flow of fentanyl from Mexico.

"It's a fine line to help people and try to get people clean, and at the same time incarcerate and get the drug dealers off the streets," said Nathan Manning, a Republican state senator in Ohio who is sponsoring legislation to make it clear that materials used

to test drugs for fentanyl are legal. The urgency is heightened because of the deepening impact of the drugs. Last year, the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reported the nation had hit a grim milestone. For the first time, more than 100,000 Americans had died of drug overdoses over a 12-month period. About two-thirds of the deaths were linked to fentanyl and other synthetic drugs, which can be 50 to 100 times more potent than morphine, heroin or prescription opioids.

The recent case of five West Point cadets who overdosed on fentanyl-laced cocaine during spring break in Florida put the dangers and pervasiveness of the fentanyl crisis back in the spotlight.

The chemical precursors to the drugs are being shipped largely from China to Mexico, where much of the illicit fentanyl supply is produced in labs before being smuggled into the U.S. While users sometimes seek out fentanyl specifically, it and other synthetics with similar properties



A display of the fentanyl and meth that was seized by Customs and Border Protection officers over the weekend at the Nogales Port of Entry is shown during a press conference on Thursday, Jan. 31, 2019, in Nogales, Ariz.

Associated Press

are often mixed with other drugs or formed into counterfeit pills so users often don't know they're taking it. Advocates say test strips can help prevent accidental overdoses of drugs laced with fentanyl. The strips are given out at nee-

dle exchanges and sometimes at concerts or other events where drugs are expected to be sold or used. Thomas Stuber, chief legislative officer at The LCADA Way, a drug treatment organization in Ohio that serves Lorain County and

nearby areas, has been pushing for the test strip legislation. It also would ease access to naloxone, a drug that can be used to revive people when they're having opioid overdoses.

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**LIVE ENTERTAINMENT 7 DAYS A WEEK** PROFESSIONAL COMPLIMENTARY PICTURES ON TUESDAY AND FRIDAY

<b>SUNDAY:</b> TICO KOCK STEEL DRUM 4 - 6pm	<b>MONDAY:</b> ANGELA FLORES VIOLINIST 6:30 - 8:30pm	<b>TUESDAY:</b> JEAN PAUL SAXOPHONIST 6:30 - 8:30pm	<b>WEDNESDAY:</b> CARLOS ORLATE SINGER 6:30 - 8:30pm	<b>THURSDAY:</b> MARRYBELL MADURO SINGER 6:30 - 8:30pm	<b>FRIDAY:</b> RICKY THOMAS GUITAR 7 - 9pm	<b>SATURDAY:</b> ANGELA FLORES VIOLINIST 6:30 - 8:30pm
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# States look for solutions as U.S. fentanyl deaths keep rising

Continued from Front

"This is a harm-reduction approach that has received a lot of acceptance," he said. "We cannot treat somebody if they're dead."

Since last year, at least a half-dozen states have enacted similar laws and at least a dozen others have considered them, according to research by the National Conference of State Legislatures.

In West Virginia, the state hardest hit by opioids per capita, lawmakers passed a bill this month to legalize the testing strips. It now heads to the governor.

The measure was sponsored by Republican lawmakers. But state Delegate Mike Pushkin, a Democrat



Guns, drugs and money are displayed at a press conference, Thursday, June 20, 2019, in Boston.

Associated Press

whose district includes central Charleston, has also been pushing for more access to fentanyl strips. He said the situation got worse last year when a state law tightened regulations on needle exchanges, causing some of them to close.

Pushkin, who also is in long-term addiction recovery, is pleased with passage of the testing strip bill but upset with another measure passed this month that would increase the penalties for trafficking fentanyl. That bill also would create

a new crime of adding fentanyl to another drug.

"Their initial reaction is, 'We have to do something,'" he said. "It's not just about doing something, it's about doing the right thing that actually has results."

But for many lawmakers, making sure that tough criminal penalties apply to fentanyl is a priority.

California Assemblywoman Janet Nguyen, a Republican, introduced a measure that would make penalties for dealing fentanyl just as harsh as those for selling cocaine or heroin. The Republican represents Orange County, where there were more than 600 reported fentanyl-related deaths last year.

"This is sending messages to those who aren't afraid of selling these drugs that there's a longer, bigger penalty than you might think," said Nguyen, whose bill failed to advance from her chamber's public safety committee in a 5-2 vote last week. She said after the bill failed that she was considering trying again.

She said committee members stressed compassion for drug users, something she said she agrees with.

"The less available these pills are out there, the better it is," Nguyen said. "And that is going after the drug dealer."

The same day her measure failed to advance, a Democratic lawmaker in California announced a different bill to increase fentanyl-dealing penalties. The National Conference of State Legislatures found 12 states with fentanyl-specific drug trafficking or possession laws as of last year. Similar measures have been introduced or considered since the start of 2021 in at least 19 states, the Associated Press found in an analysis of bills compiled by LegiScan. That does not include measures to add more synthetic opioids to controlled substance lists to mirror federal law; those have been adopted in many states, with bipartisan support.

Fentanyl has been in the spotlight in Colorado since

February, when five people were found dead in a suburban Denver apartment from overdoses of fentanyl mixed with cocaine.

Under state law, possession with intent to distribute less than 14 grams of fentanyl is an offense normally punishable by two to four years in prison. But fentanyl is so potent that 14 grams can represent up to 700 lethal doses, under a calculation used by the U.S. Drug Enforcement Agency.

"It's making it impossible to hold the dealer accountable for the deadliness of the drugs they're peddling," Colorado House Speaker Alec Garnett, a Democrat, said in an interview.

He and a bipartisan group of lawmakers last week unveiled a bill also backed by Democratic Gov. Jared Polis that would increase penalties for dealers with smaller amounts of fentanyl and in cases where the drug leads to a death. The legislation also would increase the accessibility of naloxone and test strips while steering people who possess fentanyl into education and treatment programs.

"We have the largest incarceration rate in the entire world and we're also setting records in terms of overdose deaths," she said.

Democratic governors are focusing primarily on harm reduction methods. Among them is Illinois Gov. Jay Pritzker, who released a broad overdose action plan last month.

Several Republican governors and attorneys general have responded to the rising death toll with administrative enforcement efforts and by pushing for more federal intervention.

Last year, Texas Gov. Greg Abbott and Arizona Gov. Doug Ducey called for states to help secure the border with Mexico. Along with trying to keep people from entering the U.S., stopping the flow of fentanyl was cited as a reason. Several other Republican governors have sent contingents of state troopers or National Guard units. □

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## At D.C. roast, N.H.'s GOP governor skewers Trump as 'crazy'

By AAMER MADHANI

Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — GOP Gov. Chris Sununu of New Hampshire said Donald Trump is "crazy" and joked that if the former Republican president was admitted to a mental hospital, "he ain't getting out!"

Sununu skewered Trump during the Gridiron Club's spring dinner Saturday night, an annual Washington gathering featuring skits and speeches from Democrats, Republicans and journalists that are expected to "sing" but "not burn" the capital's political elite.

"He's (expletive) crazy!" Sununu said in salty remarks that roasted members of both parties as well as the Washington journalists who cover them. The governor added: "The press often will ask me if I think Donald Trump is crazy. And I'll say it this way: I don't think he's so crazy that you could put him in a mental institution. But I think if he were in one, he ain't getting out!"

Sununu also spoke of being left astonished by an encounter with Trump when



Republican New Hampshire Gov. Chris Sununu addresses racing fans at a NASCAR Cup Series auto race, July 18, 2021, in Loudon, N.H.

the former president was visiting New Hampshire for a political rally.

After greeting Trump at the airport, Sununu said Trump insisted he ride with him to the venue. Sununu said that Trump spent most of the ride obsessing over his polling numbers, but at one point broke his train of thought to point out that all the people holding American flags along the motorcade route were his fans.

Trump pointed to one man

with a flag and sign before Trump returned to the topic of polling, Sununu recalled.

"I can't help but notice the guy he pointed at, the sign he's holding says, '(expletive, Trump!),' Sununu joked.

In his Gridiron address, Sununu also took aim at Democrats and poked fun at himself.

He said White House press secretary Jen Psaki, who is reportedly set to sign a deal soon to join MSNBC,

would be smart to get her money upfront considering the network's ratings.

Sununu noted he was included in a Washington Post list of 10 potential 2024 GOP presidential contenders. He cracked that his vast foreign policy experience included building a short wall with polite signage on New Hampshire's border with Canada.

Rep. Jamie Raskin of Maryland, who spoke on behalf of Democrats at the dinner,

remarked that he had not heard a "Republican use the F-word that much since the Nixon administration."

"But I've got to say that Gov. Sununu's eloquent profanity is the kind of insurrection the GOP needs today," Raskin said.

The sitting president typically attends the event. President Joe Biden, who spent the weekend in his home state of Delaware, skipped but sent a video message. Commerce Secretary Gina Raimondo delivered remarks on behalf of the administration.

Republicans last year made a pitch to Sununu to challenge incumbent Democrat Sen. Maggie Hassan in 2022, but he ultimately declined and opted to run for reelection as governor. The seat is one of several that Republicans are eyeing as they look to win control of the Senate in upcoming midterm elections.

Sununu told the Washington Examiner that after hearing GOP leadership's plan for the next two years, he decided wasn't interested in simply being a "roadblock" to Biden's agenda. □

Associated Press

## Biden says sub he commissioned will enhance U.S. security

By WILL WEISSERT

Associated Press

WILMINGTON, Del. (AP)

— In a public ceremony delayed two years by the pandemic, President Joe Biden on Saturday commissioned the USS Delaware, a nuclear attack submarine, saying it would enhance national security, though he made no reference to the global turmoil from Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

"As the commander in chief, I believe it is our sacred obligation as a nation to prepare and equip those troops that we send into harm's way and to care for them and their families when they return home," he told a crowd of invited guests and dignitaries assembled on a sunny but chilly spring day on a restricted part of the dock in Wilmington.

This latest Navy ship to carry the Delaware name, the president said in brief remarks, "is part of a long tradition of serving our nation proudly and strengthening our nation's security ... not just us, but our allies and partners around the world as well. In fact it's already been doing that for some time."

In April 2020, with the coronavirus pandemic spreading across the United States, the Delaware was commissioned while underwater, a first for a Navy vessel. Since then it has been in training. After the ceremony, the president took a private tour of the Delaware. He did not respond to questions from reporters about Ukraine.

First lady Jill Biden is the submarine's sponsor, a role meant to bring a ves-

sel luck. During her remarks, she exclaimed: "Officers and crew of the USS Delaware, man our ship and bring her to life." The crew responded, "Aye aye, ma'am" and, as she applauded, sailors in dress uniforms ran behind the crowd, then down onto the submarine and lined up on the deck.

Saturday's commissioning comes amid the war in Ukraine and after Biden announced a budget blueprint that proposes spending \$795 billion on defense, which would mean an increase for the Pentagon. Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell, R-Ky., said the proposal would at best "leave our armed forces simply treading water" because of inflation. But some progressive Democrats complained



President Joe Biden returns a salute as he stands with first lady Jill Biden and Cmdr. Matthew Horton, Commanding Officer, USS Delaware, before they board the USS Delaware, Virginia-class fast-attack submarine, for a tour at the Port of Wilmington in Wilmington, Del., Saturday, April 2, 2022.

Associated Press

that was too much funding after the withdrawal of U.S. forces from Afghanistan last summer.

With a crew of 136 sailors, the Delaware is the 18th Virginia-class fast attack submarine, which is designed to seek and destroy enemy submarines and surface ships, and can fire Tomahawk cruise missiles,

the Navy says.

The ship is 377 feet long, can dive to depths greater than 800 feet and operate at speeds in excess of 25 knots submerged. The submarine is also designed to operate for more than three decades without needing to refuel, according to a Defense Department news release. □

# California mass shooting: 6 dead, 12 injured in Sacramento

By ADAM BEAM

Associated Press

**SACRAMENTO, Calif (AP) —**

Six people were killed and 12 injured early Sunday in Sacramento when shots were fired into crowds as bars and nightclubs emptied for the night in the second mass shooting in five weeks in California's capital city.

Police were searching for at least one suspect and had recovered at least one firearm. Investigators said they were reviewing video footage posted to social media that showed what appeared to be an altercation before the gunfire erupted.

A video posted to Twitter showed people running through the street amid the sounds of rapid gunfire in the city of about 525,000 located 75 miles (120 kilometers) from San Francisco. "This morning our city has a broken heart," Sacramento Mayor Darrell Steinberg said. We don't know all the facts but we know there were mass casualties in a very short amount of time." Officers were patrolling the area near the shooting site two blocks from the Capitol at about 2 a.m. when they heard gunfire and rushed to the scene, Police Chief Kathy Lester told reporters. They found a large crowd gathered and six people dead in the street.

Twelve people who police said were shot and wounded were taken to a hospital or hospitals. The Sacramento Fire Department said four of the seven people transported by its emergency workers were suffering from critical injuries. Authorities said some gunshot victims drove themselves to hospitals or were driven.

Authorities recovered "at least one firearm" from the scene, a police statement said, and urged witnesses or anyone with recordings of the shooting to contact police.

"We're asking for the public's help in helping us to identify the suspects in this," Lester said. Asked if authorities were searching for one or more than one suspects, Lester told reporters that



**A roadblock is set a block away from the scene of an apparent mass shooting in Sacramento, Calif., Sunday, April 3, 2022.**

Associated Press

she did not know.

Police announced in a statement that investigators were aware of a video on social media that appeared to show an altercation before the shooting, but did not yet know whether it was relevant to their investigation.

Kelsey Schar was staying on the fourth floor of Citizen Hotel when she said she heard gunshots and saw flashes in the dark. She walked to the window and "saw a guy running and just shooting," Schar told The Associated Press in an interview.

Her friend, Madalyn Woodward, said she saw a crowd in the street scatter amid the gunfire and a girl who appeared to have been shot in the arm laying on the ground. Security guards rushed to help the girl with what looked like napkins to try to stanch the bleeding. Pop duo Aly & AJ performed Saturday at Sacramento's Crest Theatre and their tour bus was caught in the gunfire, the musicians said on Twitter. No one in their touring group was hurt, the tweet said.

Sunday's violence was the

third time in the U.S. this year that at least six people were killed in a mass shooting, according to a database compiled by The Associated Press, USA Today and Northeastern University. And it was the second mass shooting in Sacramento in the last five weeks. On Feb. 28, a father killed his three daughters, a chaperone and himself in a church during a weekly supervised visitation. David Mora, 39, was armed with a homemade semiautomatic rifle-style weapon, even though he was under a restraining order that prohibited him from possessing a firearm.

Councilmember Katie Valenzuela, who represents the area where the shooting happened, said she's fielded phone calls reporting many violent incidents in her district in the 15 months she's been in office. Valenzuela cried at a news conference as she told reporters that the latest phone call woke her up at 2:30 a.m. Sunday with details about the latest tragedy.

"I'm heartbroken and I'm outraged," she said. "Our community deserves better

than this."

The shooting happened on the outskirts of the city's main entertainment district, which is anchored by the Golden One Center that attracts big-name concerts and is home to the NBA's Sacramento Kings. City officials have invested heavily in the area to promote development in the area.

The effort was working until the pandemic hit and forced many businesses to close, according to Grant Gorman, a bartender who lives near the place the shooting happened.

"Just when we were reaching some semblance of it being a bustling downtown area that was safe and we had a bunch of open businesses to go to, the pandemic hit it and just crushed it," Gorman said.

Steinberg, the mayor, said in recent years it "has been a very difficult time in downtown Sacramento and Sacramento as a whole." He added that the shooting "gives pause to our entire community" but urged people to continue visiting the area despite the recent violence.

California Gov. Gavin Newsom said in a statement

that his administration was working closely with law enforcement officials.

"What we do know at this point is that another mass casualty shooting has occurred, leaving families with lost loved ones, multiple individuals injured and a community in grief," he said.

The area where Sunday's shooting occurred is packed with restaurants and bars. Nightclubs close at 2 a.m. and it's normal for streets to be full of people at that hour.

Kay Harris, 32, told AP she was asleep when one of her family members called to say they thought her brother Sergio Harris had been killed. She said she thought he had been at the London nightclub, which is near the shooting.

Harris said she has been to the club a few times and described it as a place for "the younger crowd." She spent the morning circling the block waiting for news.

"Very much so a senseless, violent act," she said.

Pamela Harris, Sergio Harris' mother, told The Sacramento Bee the family has not heard from him yet.

"We just want to know what happened to him," Pamela Harris told the newspaper. "Not knowing anything is just hard to face."

Berry Accius, a community activist, said he came to the scene shortly after the shooting happened.

"The first thing I saw was like victims. I saw a young girl with a whole bunch of blood in her body, a girl taking off glass from her, a young girl screaming saying, 'They killed my sister.' A mother running up, 'Where's my son, has my son been shot?'" he said.

UC Davis Medical Center received four patients from the downtown shooting, spokesperson Stephanie Winn said. She declined to provide their genders or conditions, referring media inquiries to police.

Ten ambulances and fifty first responders from the Sacramento Fire Department responded to the shooting, according to Capt. Keith Wade. □

## Jordan prince drops title in protest over how country is run

**AMMAN, Jordan (AP)** — An outspoken half-brother of Jordan's king relinquished his princely title Sunday in apparent protest over how the country is run. It was the latest chapter in an ongoing palace feud that saw the junior royal placed under house arrest a year ago. Prince Hamzah posted the announcement on his official Twitter account. He wrote that he was driven to the decision because his convictions cannot be reconciled with the "current approaches, policies and methods of our institutions." He stopped short of directly criticizing King Abdullah II and the ruling elites, as he had done in the past, but his tone signaled that the rift has not been mended, as the Royal Court suggested in the past.

The Royal Court had no immediate comment. Abdullah and Hamzah are sons of King Hussein, who ruled Jordan for nearly a half-century before his death in 1999. Abdullah had appointed Hamzah as crown prince upon his succession but stripped him of the title in 2004.

The monarch had placed Hamzah under house arrest



Jordan's then Crown Prince Hamzah, left, with his mother then Queen Noor, during his wedding ceremony in Amman, Jordan, May 27, 2004.

last April for his alleged plot to destabilize the Western-allied kingdom. In a video statement at the time, Hamzah denied the allegations, saying he was being punished for speaking out against official corruption. Last month, Hamzah apologized to his brother, according to a letter released by the Royal Court at the

time. Hamzah went on to express hope that "we can turn the page on this chapter in our country's and our family's history." Analyst Amer Sabaileh said he expected Hamzah's announcement to rekindle the royal rift that many in Jordan believed had been resolved with the prince's apology.

Sabaileh noted that Hamzah had made the decision unilaterally and announced it on his personal Twitter account, rather than in consultation with the royal family.

"He is trying to re-engage with the old narrative," Sabaileh said of Hamzah. "We are back to the point where he is saying he is not

satisfied, that he is still bitter and there is no reconciliation."

It was not immediately clear if Hamzah's decision to relinquish his title will help restore his freedom of movement. Hamzah has only appeared in public once since the feud. In February, the court announced the birth of Hamzah's son.

The feud was a rare case of infighting within the Hashemite royal family going public. At one point Jordan imposed a gag order on reporting about the events, reflecting the sensitivity of issues surrounding the royal family.

Abdullah had accused his brother of sedition but said the dispute was being resolved within the family and that Hamzah remained in his own palace under the king's protection. Two former senior officials implicated in the alleged plot were convicted of sedition and sentenced to 15 years in prison by a state security court. Particulars about the alleged plot have never been made public.

Jordan is a close Western ally and has long been seen as an island of stability in a turbulent region. □

Associated Press

## Kim's sister enraged by Seoul's preemptive strike comments

By **HYUNG-JIN KIM**

Associated Press

**SEOUL, South Korea (AP)** — The influential sister of North Korean leader Kim Jong Un called the South Korean defense minister a "scum-like guy" for talking about preemptive strikes on the North, warning Sunday that the South may face "a serious threat." Kim Yo Jong's statement came amid heightened tensions between the rival Koreas over the North's spate of weapons tests this year, including its first intercontinental ballistic missile launch in more than four years. Some experts say her statement could signal that North Korea will conduct more significant weapons tests soon and take a hardline stance on South Korea.

The ICBM test on March 24 that broke North Korea's four-year moratorium on big weapons tests was an embarrassment to South Korea's liberal President Moon Jae-in, who has pushed hard to achieve greater reconciliation between the countries and find a peaceful resolution to the North Korean nuclear crisis. During a visit to the country's strategic missile command on Friday, South Korean Defense Minister Suh Wook said that South Korea has the ability and readiness to launch precision strikes on North Korea if it detects the North intends to fire missiles at South Korea. Seoul has long maintained such a preemptive attack strategy to cope with North Korea's growing

missile and nuclear threats, but it was highly unusual for a senior Seoul official under the Moon administration to publicly discuss it.

On Sunday, Kim's sister, Kim Yo Jong, issued blistering rhetoric directed at Suh and threats toward Seoul.

"The senseless and scum-like guy dare mention a 'preemptive strike' at a nuclear weapons state," Kim Yo Jong said in a statement carried by state media. "South Korea may face a serious threat owing to the reckless remarks made by its defense minister."

"South Korea should discipline itself if it wants to stave off disaster," she said. Kim Yo Jong, a senior official in the North's ruling Workers' Party, is in charge of relations with Seoul and



Kim Yo Jong, sister of North Korea's leader Kim Jong Un, attends a wreath-laying ceremony at Ho Chi Minh Mausoleum in Hanoi, Vietnam, March 2, 2019.

Associated Press

Washington. South Korea's spy service says she is the North's No. 2 official behind her brother. Pak Jong Chon, a secretary in the Workers' Party's central committee, separately warned that "any slight misjudgment and ill statement rattling the other party under the

present situation" may trigger "a dangerous conflict and a full-blown war."

Pak said North Korea will "mercilessly direct military force into destroying major targets in Seoul and the South Korean army" if South Korea preemptively attacks North Korea. □

# Taliban clamp down on drugs, announce ban on poppy harvest

By **KATHY GANNON** and **MOHAMMAD SHOAIB AMIN**  
Associated Press

**KABUL, Afghanistan (AP)** —

Afghanistan's ruling Taliban on Sunday announced a ban on harvesting poppies, even as farmers in some parts of the country began extracting the opium from the plant that is needed for making heroin.

The Taliban warned farmers that their crops will be burned and that they can be jailed if they proceed with the harvest. The harvest and planting seasons vary across Afghanistan. In the Taliban heartland of southern Kandahar the harvesting has begun but in the east of the country some farmers are just beginning to plant their crop.

In desperately poor Afghanistan the ban seems certain to further impoverish its poorest citizens at a time when the country is in an economic free fall.

The decree was announced by Taliban spokesman Zabihullah Mujahid at a news conference in the capital of Kabul. The order also outlawed the manufacturing of narcotics and the transportation, trade, export and import of heroin, hashish and alcohol.

The ban is reminiscent of



**Afghan farmers harvest poppy in Nad Ali district, Helmand province, Afghanistan, Friday, April 1, 2022.**

the previous Taliban rule in the late 1990s when the movement espousing a harsh interpretation of Islam outlawed poppy production. At that time, the ban was implemented countrywide within two years, and according to the U.N. largely helped eradicate poppy production.

However, after the ouster of the Taliban in 2001, farmers in many parts of the country returned to poppy production. Poppies are the main source of income

for millions of small farmers and day laborers who can earn upwards of \$300 a month harvesting them and extracting the opium. Today, Afghanistan is the world's largest producer of opium, despite billions of dollars spent by the international community during its 20 years in Afghanistan to eradicate the drug. In 2021, before the Taliban takeover, Afghanistan produced more than 6,000 tons of opium, which the U.N. Office on Drugs and

Crime said could potentially yield 320 tons of pure heroin.

Afghanistan produces more opium than all opium-producing countries combined and last year was the sixth straight year of record opium harvests.

During the years-long Taliban insurgency, the movement reportedly made millions of dollars taxing farmers and middle men to move their drugs outside Afghanistan. Senior officials of the U.S.-backed govern-

ment also reportedly made millions on the flourishing drug trade.

Washington spent more than \$8 billion trying to eradicate poppy production in Afghanistan during its nearly 20-year war, which ended with the Taliban takeover of the country in August.

Nearly 80% of heroin produced from Afghan opium reaches Europe through Central Asia and Pakistan. According to a U.N. report in 2021, income from opiates in Afghanistan was between \$1.8 billion and \$2.7 billion, more than 7% of the country's GDP. The same report said "illicit drug supply chains outside Afghanistan" make much more.

The Taliban's ban comes as the country faces a humanitarian crisis that spurred the U.N. to ask for \$4.4 billion last month as 95% of Afghans do not have enough to eat.

The ban, while hitting drug production houses hard, will likely devastate small farmers who rely on opium production to survive. It's difficult to know how the Taliban will be able to create substitute crops and financing for farmers, at a time when international development money has stopped. □

Associated Press

## Ex-UN prosecutor urges global arrest warrant for Putin



**Carla del Ponte, then Member of the Independent Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic, attends a press conference, at the European headquarters of the United Nations in Geneva, Switzerland, Wednesday, March 1, 2017.**  
Associated Press

**GENEVA (AP)** — The former chief prosecutor of United Nations war crimes

tribunals for the former Yugoslavia and Rwanda has called for an international

arrest warrant to be issued for Russian President Vladimir Putin. "Putin is a war criminal," Carla Del Ponte told the Swiss newspaper *Le Temps* in an interview published Saturday.

In interviews given to Swiss media to mark the release of her latest book, the Swiss lawyer who oversaw U.N. investigations in Rwanda and the former Yugoslavia said there were clear war crimes being committed in Ukraine.

She said she was particularly shocked by the use of mass graves in Russia's war on Ukraine, which recalls the worst of the wars in the former Yugoslavia.

"I hoped never to see mass graves again," she told the

newspaper *Blick*. "These dead people have loved ones who don't even know what's become of them. That is unacceptable."

Other war crimes she identified in Ukraine included attacks on civilians, the destruction of civilian buildings and even the demolishing of entire villages. She said the investigation in Ukraine would be easier than that in Yugoslavia because the country itself had requested an international probe. The current ICC chief prosecutor, Karim Khan, visited Ukraine last month.

If the ICC finds proof of war crimes, she said, "you must go up the chain of command until you reach

those who took the decisions."

She said it would be possible to bring even Putin to account.

"You mustn't let go, continue to investigation. When the investigation into Slobodan Milosevic began, he was still president of Serbia.

Who would have thought then that he would one day be judged? Nobody," she told *Blick*.

Del Ponte added that investigations should be carried out into possible war crimes committed by both sides, pointing also to reports about the alleged torture of some Russian prisoners of war by Ukrainian forces. □



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## Cuba's new private companies show off products at trade fair

By **ANDREA RODRÍGUEZ**  
Associated Press

**HAVANA (AP)** — The event at a convention center in Cuba's capital looks like a lot of trade fairs: Music blares as visitors stroll between colorful booths displaying a wild variety of products: furniture or clothing, glassware or recycled paper, chocolates or cleaning products.

But it's a commercial milestone for Cuba: The companies showing off their wares are largely formal, private companies that were legalized only about six months ago — more than a half century after the Communist government banned nearly all private enterprise.

"We're experiencing something without precedent, at least for our generation," said César Santos, a 36-year-old engineer who is a partner in Lucendi SRL, a company that offers electrical installations both for private and state clients. "We are seeing other businesses that we didn't even know existed."

Santos was born 18 years after the government closed or took over private businesses in 1968, consolidating a Soviet-style socialist system that had been forged following the 1959 revolution led by Fidel Castro.

Cuba's single-party political system has survived the 1991 collapse of the Soviet Union, but its socialist



A vintage Russian-made Lada car, right, and an American-made classic car drive past the Capitol in Havana, Cuba, Friday, April 1, 2022.

Associated Press

economy has continually struggled to find its footing in the decades following the loss of heavy Soviet subsidies. It has long tried to attract foreign investors and has expanded tourism, despite U.S. embargo measures that impede both. But productivity in the state-run sector has remained dismal.

Fidel Castro's government reluctantly began allowing small-scale individual private businesses in the early 1990s, then cracked down amid complaints they were creating a class of relatively rich people under a system that prizes equality over wealth.

With the inefficient economy still struggling, the government led by his brother and heir Raul once again opened the door to individual businesses in 2010. On the eve of the pandemic, some 600,000 people were working in that sector on the island of 11.3 million people.

They run little restaurants, rent out rooms, offer repair services, even at least one chic clothing boutique — though they supposedly can employ only family members or a handful of outsiders.

But the new policy that took effect in September — while the economy was

slammed by shortages, pandemic restrictions and a tightened U.S. embargo — potentially goes far beyond: It allows actual companies that can employ up to 100 people, can get formal financing and do business with state enterprises. Within six months, 2,614 new "limited responsibility societies" — or SRLs in Spanish — have registered. And 2,523 of those are private companies, with the rest either state or cooperative enterprises. Most are in the Havana area.

So far, they employ about 42,000 people.

Restrictions remain, however. The government says the

state will remain the dominant force in the economy and the new companies can't do journalism or offer key professional services such as architecture, medicine or law.

And the business people at the fair said they still face bureaucratic hurdles that need to be smoothed if the system is to work better: For example, banking, import and export red tape is complicated, they said.

The fair closing Sunday at the Exocuba center on the southern fringe of Havana features 720 companies and cooperatives showing off everything from yoghurt to construction materials.

Officials hoped the gathering in part would help entrepreneurs make business contacts among themselves, said Suleidis Álvarez, an official with the capital's Plaza of the Revolution municipality. For example, she said, a woodworking company had found a producer of nails it needed.

The youth of the participants was notable on an island that has suffered the loss of many young people through emigration.

"The migratory crisis we're experiencing currently is really sad," Santos said. "Nevertheless, we are seeing opportunities arising through this private enterprise (policy). ... I prefer to bet on building my business in the country where I am." □

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MedCare Fit2Fly Testing Center at the Cove Mall is opposite the Holiday Inn and is open every day for walk-ins from 8 AM through 6 PM. MedCare's other location is situated at The Courtyard by Marriott Aruba Resort, is across the street from the RIU Hotel and is open every day from 8:00 AM until 2 PM. These two locations are at a stone's throw from your resort, condominium, or other vacation accommodation. Walk-ins are welcome.

MedCare Clinic, a high-quality medical clinic that specializes in urgent care for tourists and that has been appointed as the national COVID-19 clinic for tourists, and Laboratorio di Servizio, a full-service modern medical laboratory with state-of-the-art equipment, have partnered up to provide fast and reliable COVID-19 testing to all. Laboratorio di Servizio is ISO-15189:2012 accredited by the Dutch Council for Accreditation (M317).



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## More than 80 employees were honored by the Divi Resort



**ORANJESTAD – On March 30, 2022, the Minister of Tourism Dangui Oduber, and the General Manager of the Divi & Tamarijn Mr. Marin Bijl, honored 85 employees at the Divi Resort during a festive event held in the ballroom of the Al-hambra.**

These employees reached their respective anniversaries in the third and last quarter of 2021. However, due to the Covid pandemic, the celebration was not held before.

These 85 employees work in different areas and at the various Divi resorts:  
31 employees celebrated their 5th anniversary;  
27 employees celebrated their 10th anniversary;  
12 employees celebrated their 15th anniversary;  
3 employees celebrated their 20th anniversary;  
5 employees celebrated their 25th anniversary;  
6 employees celebrated their 35th anniversary;  
1 employee celebrated its 40th anniversary.

The DIVI Resort opened its doors in 1969 under the name Divi Aruba. Now they operate 5 Divi Resorts in Aruba, of which 3 are time-shares:  
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Resort;  
Divi Village Golf and Beach Resort;  
Divi Aruba All Inclusive Resort;  
Divi Tamarijn All-inclusive Resort.

The Minister thanked all the 85 employees for their valuable contribution to the Tourism sector of Aruba and for providing quality service to our visitors. □

## Aruba to Me



ORANJESTAD –We would like to portrait you! By inviting you to send us your favorite vacation picture while enjoying our Happy Island. Complete the sentence: Aruba to me is ..... Send your picture with that text (including your name and where you are from) to: news@arubatoday.com and we will publish your vacation memory. Isn't that a special way to keep your best moments alive? Please do note: By submitting photos, text or any other materials, you give permission to The Aruba Today Newspaper, Caribbean Speed Printers and any of its affiliated companies to use said materials, as well as names, likeness, etc. for promotional purposes without compensation. Last but not least: check out our website and Facebook page! Thank you for supporting our free newspaper, we strive to make you a happy reader every day again.

For today, we want to highlight a beautiful vacation memory from one of our visitors, namely Robin Juckem from Berwyn, Pennsylvania, USA who wrote to us saying "Aruba to me is peace and tranquility (and spectacular food, too!). Aruba is our favorite place to spend time."

We want to thank Robin for sharing this lovely message with us and the valuable memory she created on our happy Island. □

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## Remembering Aruba's history and involvement in World War II

*Written by Evert Bongers*

This February it was 80 years ago that Aruba became involved in World War II through a submarine attack by Nazi Germany in 1942. They targeted the two oil refineries on the island, the Lago and the Eagle, the former of which was a substantial provider of fuel for the allied.

For the Netherlands, the Second World War started on May 10, 1940, for other countries in central and Eastern Europe as early as 1939. The 1930s were largely dominated by the build-up to the outbreak of this war that would set the world on fire. From Hitler's rise in German



politics to building a war industry that produced submarines, everything led to that second major war in less than half a century.

For the Netherlands Antilles, there were concerns for the safety of the islands where refineries (the Lago and the Arend (Eagle) here and the Isla on our sister island) produced jet fuel, essential for the Allied forces. Our territory was relatively safe within the territory of the United States and far from the European hotbed of war. The colony of Curaçao, as the 6 islands were then called, also had some form of defense itself, however small.

Governor Wouters, a former soldier in the army, made an effort to improve the defense of the islands. He urged the motherland to supply more weapons, ammunition, vehicles, vessels and military personnel to deal with them in the event of a hostile attack. His pleas were only sparingly answered. The Colonial and Defense Ministers did decide to place heavy coastal batteries on both islands, in the vicinity of the essential refineries. In Aruba, behind the Lago, near Juwana Morto, a coastal artillery battery was built: three gun emplacements with large cannons, with a



bunker as headquarters. These four locations can still be found, although after 80 years heavily damaged by the ravages of time. Gunmen and naval personnel made up the crew.

Along the southwest coast of Aruba, from the lighthouse on Hudishibana (better known as the California Lighthouse) to the lighthouse of Seroe Colorado (which was demolished), a large number of military posts were set up, where they kept watch with machine guns and searchlights. That was in important places, such as around the Lago refinery with its harbor, the Arend refinery with its large pier, the airport, the Dakota Field, with American warplanes, the Savaneta camp with the military headquarters, the water distillation facility at Spanish Lagoon and of course Oranjestad and San Nicolas.

On the north coast there was also a guard post, at the North Cape, at Fontijn. A large cannon

that could rotate 360 degrees was installed on Seroe Colorado and its foundation is still there today. Together with the four locations of the coastal artillery battery on Juwana Morto, this foundation has been preserved as military heritage from Aruba's history. This also includes two bunkers, one of which is located between the roundabout in front of the airport and the building of the Archivo Nacional. It served as a storage bunker for ammunition at the 'Dakota Field' and is now a monument to the Militia Company and the Aruba Volunteer Corps. Then there is a small hexagonal bunker, of the 'pillbox' type, which can still be found on the beach of the Tamarijn Resort, over which the 'Bunkerbar' had been built and has been open for many years. Behind that beach was the Arend Petroleum Maatschappij, the Eagle refinery and in front of it the harbor entrance.

To be continued...□



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# Battle heats up over remaining federal rental assistance

By MICHAEL CASEY

Associated Press

In her office at a nonprofit in central Nebraska, Karen Rathke routinely encounters residents still stung by the pandemic and hoping to get help with their rent. Rathke, president of the Heartland United Way, was hoping to tap into an additional \$120 million in federal Emergency Rental Assistance to help them. But that money, part of what's known as ERA2, is at risk after Republican Gov. Pete Ricketts said he doesn't want it.

Many other states have in recent months returned tens of millions of dollars in unused rental assistance because they have so few renters — but only Nebraska has flat out refused the aid.

"I'm very concerned about not having anything," Rathke said of the federal money, which can be allocated over the next three years for everything from rent to services preventing eviction to affordable housing activities.

"All these nonprofits, when people come to them asking for help, the bucket will be empty," she said. "It is hard to tell people no, to tell people that we don't have the funds to help them."

The debate is playing out across the country as the Treasury Department begins reallocating some of the \$46.5 billion in rental assistance from places slow to spend to others that are running out of funds.

States and localities have until September to spend their share of the first \$25 billion allocated, known as ERA1, and the second \$21.55 billion, known as ERA2, by 2025. So far, Treasury says \$30 billion has been spent or allocated through February.

Treasury announced earlier this month that over \$1 billion of ERA1 funds would be moved, for a total of \$2.3 billion reallocated this year. Larger states like California, New York, New Jersey and Texas are getting hundreds of millions of dollars in additional money. Native



A "For Rent" sign is posted on a building, Tuesday, Jan. 18, 2022, in Philadelphia.

Associated Press

American tribes, including the Oglala Sioux Lakota in South Dakota and Chipewa Cree in Montana, are also receiving tens of millions of dollars in additional help.

Those losing money are almost all smaller Republican states with large rural populations and fewer renters. Many were slow to spend their share as required by program rules, so they either voluntarily returned money or had it taken. Some, like South Dakota, Wyoming and New Hampshire, unsuccessfully pitched to use the money for other things like affordable housing.

Treasury officials, housing advocates and many Republican governors argue there is still plenty of money to help renters in these states and that the reallocation gets money where it's most needed. Montana, for example, returned \$54.6 million but still has \$224.5 million. West Virginia returned more than \$42.4 million but still has \$224.7 million, according to Treasury.

"We are trying to reallocate the best we can," said Gene Sperling, who is charged with overseeing implementation of President Joe Biden's \$1.9 trillion coronavirus rescue package. "This is a balancing act, but one that is rooted in commitment to getting the most funds to the most

people in need as possible."

North Dakota returned \$150 million of its \$352 million, saying it couldn't effectively spend all the money by the deadline. The state believes the remaining funds are sufficient to meet the needs of those who are eligible.

Some Democratic lawmakers disagree.

"Outrageous and unacceptable: turning back rental assistance funds when applications are piling up and people are being evicted," tweeted Democratic Rep. Karla Rose Hanson, of Fargo.

South Dakota was forced to return more than \$81 million — though more than \$9 million went to Native American tribes in the state. Gov. Kristi Noem suggested the money was not necessary, adding: "Our renters enjoy something even better than government handouts: a job."

But Democratic Sen. Reynold Nesiba said there was a lack of awareness about the rental assistance and criticized the state for not doing more to promote it. He pointed to a \$5 million tourism advertising campaign that was paid for with coronavirus relief funds and questioned why that level of promotion didn't happen for pandemic relief programs.

Meanwhile, organizations

that are helping administer the rental assistance still available expect a continued need. The state has long faced a run on affordable housing, which has only been exacerbated during the pandemic.

"Housing costs are just too high," said Sandy Miller, who coordinates the rental assistance program for an organization called Community Action in the western half of South Dakota. "It's harder for them to get in a home, it's harder for them to stay in their home." Several states argued the reallocation addresses a flaw in the program, which created a funding formula based on population, not the number of renters in a state.

"Congress ... did not take into consideration Wyoming's small population, income levels, actual renters' needs, and that the majority of Wyoming households — 70% — are owner occupied," said Rachel Girt, the state's rental assistance communication coordinator, after the state returned \$164 million out of \$352 million. Another \$2.8 million was shifted to the Northern Arapaho Tribal Housing Program and Eastern Shoshone Housing Authority.

Josh Hanford, commissioner of the Vermont Department of Housing and Community Development, noted that the \$352 million

it received far surpassed the \$25 million given to Memphis, which has a similar population.

"As long as we're able to serve all our eligible households, hopefully folks will see that there is greater need in other parts of the country that have received a lot less assistance per household," Hanford said when asked about the state returning \$31 million.

In Nebraska, the loss of funds is projected to hit rural areas hardest.

The state program already reallocated \$85 million of its \$158 million in ERA1 to its biggest cities of Omaha and Lincoln and their respective counties. It still has nearly \$30 million. Without the additional \$120 million in ERA2 money, an analysis by the University of Nebraska-Lincoln's Center on Children, Families and the Law found that tenants in Omaha and Lincoln will still have help after September, but those in other counties will not. The state "has received and distributed an unprecedented amount of federal funding to help Nebraskans weather the storm over these past two years," he wrote in an opinion column. "But at a certain point, we must acknowledge that the storm has passed and get back to the Nebraska Way. We must guard against becoming a welfare state where people are incentivized not to work and encouraged to rely on government handouts well after an emergency is over."

But housing advocates say his decision will leave many vulnerable tenants without a lifeline. Tenants in rural areas often have access to fewer resources, including affordable housing, internet access and reliable transport.

Lawmakers passed a bill last month requiring the state to apply for the money. But Ricketts vetoed the bill, saying the state "must guard against big government socialism." If lawmakers don't override his veto, the money is likely to be reallocated by Treasury to other states. □



# Face scanner Clearview AI aims to branch out beyond police

By **MATT O'BRIEN** and **TALI ARBEL**

**AP Technology Writers**

**NEW YORK (AP)** — A controversial face recognition company that's built a massive photographic dossier of the world's people for use by police, national governments and — most recently — the Ukrainian military is now planning to offer its technology to banks and other private businesses.

Clearview AI co-founder and CEO Hoan Ton-That disclosed the plans Friday to The Associated Press in order to clarify a recent federal court filing that suggested the company was up for sale.

"We don't have any plans to sell the company," he said. Instead, he said the New York startup is looking to launch a new business venture to compete with the likes of Amazon and Microsoft in verifying people's identity using facial recognition.

The new "consent-based" product would use Clearview's algorithms to verify a person's face, but would not involve its ever-growing trove of some 20 billion images, which Ton-That said is reserved for law enforcement use. Such ID checks that can be used to validate bank transactions or for other commercial purposes are the "least controversial use case" of facial recognition, he said.

That's in contrast to the



**Hoan Ton-That, CEO of Clearview AI, talks to reporters in New York, Tuesday, Feb. 22, 2022.**

business practice for which Clearview is best known: collecting a huge trove of images posted on Facebook, YouTube and just about anywhere else on the publicly-accessible internet.

Regulators from Australia to Canada, France and Italy have taken measures to try to stop Clearview from pulling people's faces into its facial recognition engine without their consent.

So have tech giants such as Google and Facebook. Despite opposition from lawmakers, regulators, privacy advocates and the websites it scrapes for data, Clearview has continued to rack up new contracts with police departments and other government agencies. In the meantime, its growing database has helped Clearview's artificial intelligence technology learn and grow more accurate.

ticularly its investigative arm, which has used the technology to track down both the victims and perpetrators of child sexual exploitation.

Clearview in March also started offering its services for free to the Ukrainian military, in part to help identify dead Russian soldiers using Clearview's repository of about 2 billion images scraped from Russian social media website VKontakte. □

**Associated Press**

One of its biggest known federal contracts is with U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement — par-

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## Vamos, Carlos: Alcaraz gives Spain a Miami Open men's winner

**MIAMI GARDENS, Fla. (AP)**

— Spanish fans brought plenty of their nation's flags to Hard Rock Stadium on Sunday, thrusting them into the air whenever things were going well for Carlos Alcaraz.

He kept them busy, all the way to the end.

Spain finally has a Miami Open men's champion: an 18-year-old who wasn't even in the top 100 of the world rankings at this time a year ago and now heads into the clay-court season arguably playing as well as anyone. Alcaraz, the No. 14 seed, shook off a slow start to beat sixth-seeded Casper Ruud of Norway 7-5, 6-4 in Sunday's final.

"I love Miami," Alcaraz said. The melting pot city of Miami — with its massive Spanish-speaking community — loved him back, and Alcaraz said that made a big difference throughout his two-week stay. "I felt like I was home from the first minute I began playing," Alcaraz said. He became the youngest champion in Miami Open history — Novak Djokovic was 19 when he won the tournament, then the NASDAQ-100 Open, for the first time — and picked up \$1,231,245 for the victory, nearly doubling his career earnings with one check.

The shot-making ability from the Spanish teen was



**Carlos Alcaraz, of Spain, reacts after missing a shot against Casper Ruud, of Norway, during the men's singles finals of the Miami Open tennis tournament, Sunday, April 3, 2022, in Miami Gardens, Fla.**

on full display: daring drop shots in tense situations, deft touch at the net when needed, raw power from the baseline when warranted. Alcaraz often would look to his team in the stands and give a joyous yell or a knowing fist-pump, clearly feeling more comfortable as the afternoon went along.

Among those there with him: his coach, Juan Carlos Ferrero. He had been away while mourning the death of his father, but made it back to Miami in time for the final. And when the

match was over, Alcaraz hopped into the stands to give Ferrero his first hug as a Miami champion, as his coach wiped away tears. "It's pretty amazing to share this with you," Alcaraz told Ferrero. There had been four other Spanish men to make the final at what now is called the Miami Open — the tournament has changed names a few times over the years — over the last quarter-century. Sergi Bruguera was the first, in 1997. Carlos Moya was next, in 2003. David Ferrer got there in 2013 and the

best player of them all, Rafael Nadal, made it to the Miami final in 2005, 2008, 2011, 2014 and 2017. They all lost. Every time. Alcaraz ended the drought and did so with authority. He ripped a crosscourt forehand for a double-break lead of 3-0 in the second set. Ruud broke back for 3-1, and had a chance at setting up another breaker late in the set. With Alcaraz hitting a second serve at 4-3, 30-30, Ruud guessed the incoming ball's path correctly and ran around his backhand

to try what would have been a down-the-line winner. He put it just wide, and a point later Alcaraz was up 5-3. Before long, it was over. "You're such a good player already," Ruud told Alcaraz during the trophy ceremony. "You're so young and if you continue like this you will stand there many more times. I'm sure of it."

Alcaraz lost one set in six matches in Miami, improved to 18-2 overall this year and became the third-youngest winner of any ATP Masters 1000 series event — which goes back to 1990. The only younger winners: Michael Chang, and Nadal. Impressive company.

"For me, he's one of the top four people that you have to talk about at every major now, along with Djokovic, Nadal and (Daniil) Medvedev," raved tennis great Martina Navratilova on Tennis Channel after the match. "He's the fourth one, for me." Rankings-wise, both Ruud and Alcaraz leave Miami better than ever. Ruud is expected to climb one spot to a career-best No. 7 in the world when the computer numbers are updated Monday; Alcaraz will be a career-best No. 11. For Ruud, the rise has been steady. He was No. 26 in the world after Miami last year. □

**Associated Press**

## Mathieu van der Poel wins Tour of Flanders for 2nd time



**Netherlands' Mathieu Van Der Poel of the Alpecin Fenix team, right, crosses the finish line to win the Ronde van Vlaanderen in Oudenaarde, Belgium, Sunday, April 3, 2022.**

**Associated Press**

**OUDENAARDE, Belgium (AP)** — Dutch rider Ma-

thieu van der Poel came out of a four-man sprint to win the Tour of Flanders cobbled classic for the second time on Sunday. Two-time Tour de France champion Tadej Pogacar blew his chances in the race's finale. Van der Poel and Pogacar escaped from the group of remaining contenders and rode together for the last 15 kilometers after the Slovenian rider launched a sharp attack in the Oude Kwaremont climb.

Van der Poel was the only one able to follow and the 273-kilometer one-day classic looked set for

a two-man sprint. But the leading duo played a cat and mouse game in the final kilometer as Pogacar waited for an opening that never came, and they were ultimately caught by chasers with some 250 meters left. Pogacar was boxed behind Frenchman Valentin Madouas and Dutchman Dylan van Baarle in the sprint. He gestured in frustration as he crossed the line in fourth place. Van Baarle was runner-up ahead of Madouas. Wout van Aert of Belgium did not compete after testing positive for COVID-19. But Belgian cham-

pion Lotte Kopecky gave the local fans something to cheer about by winning the women's race ahead of former world champion Annemiek van Vleuten of the Netherlands. Another Dutch rider, Chantal van den Broek-Blaak — a teammate of Kopecky — completed the podium. A versatile rider, Van der Poel has won titles in many disciplines and wore the Tour de France yellow jersey for six days last year. He is the grandson of the late French rider Raymond Poulidor. Van der Poel won his first Tour of Flanders in 2020. □

# On the prowl? Tiger arriving at Masters, unsure of playing

By DOUG FERGUSON

AP Golf Writer

**AUGUSTA, Ga. (AP)** — A comeback unlike any other for Tiger Woods might start at the Masters.

Just over 13 months since Woods damaged his right leg so badly he said doctors considered amputation, Woods arrived at Augusta National on Sunday afternoon and warmed up on a range where there were more photographers than players.

Woods hit balls for about 20 minutes and then got in a cart and headed to the course, which is closed Sunday afternoon to everyone except players and caddies. Already a star attraction, the hype over the five-time Masters champion is higher than ever after a violent single-car crash that looked as though it might end his career.

Still to come is the decision on playing.

In a tweet Sunday morning announcing he was coming to Augusta to resume preparations for the Masters, he said it will be a "game-time decision" whether he competes.

The Masters does not have a firm deadline to commit like regular tour events. It is an invitation tournament, and players typically notify the club only if they do not plan to play.

Tee times are published Tuesday.

"Knowing Tiger the way I know him, if he wasn't totally like ... pretty much feel he has a chance to win, he wouldn't tee it up," Mark O'Meara said. "The thing about Tiger Woods is usually when everybody thinks he can't do something, that's when he does it."

If Woods decides to play — he played 18 holes at Augusta National five days ago — it would be his first competition against the world's best players since Nov. 15, 2020, when the Masters was moved to autumn because of the pandemic.

Photographers and media waited at the far end of the viewing area on the range near the caddie house to see when he would arrive.

Woods showed up on the other end, shaking hands with defending champion Hideki Matsuyama.

Kevin Na and Billy Horschel were among those who came over to shake hands or hug him. Also on the range were Sungjae Im, Mackenzie Hughes and Jason Kokrak. Sunday afternoon before Masters week is a quiet time most years. Just not this one.

Woods was recovering from a fifth back surgery when on Feb. 23, 2021, two days after he presented the trophy at the Genesis Invitational that he hosts at Riviera, he crashed his SUV over a median on a suburban coastal road in Los Angeles and down the side of a hill.

Police estimated he was

going at least 84 mph in a 45 mph zone.

Doctors said Woods shattered tibia and fibula bones in his right leg in multiple locations. Those were stabilized by a rod in the tibia, while a combination of screws and pins were used to stabilize additional injuries in the ankle and foot.

Woods said he spent three months immobilized in a makeshift hospital bed set up in his Florida home. Only then he could start moving around on crutches, and eventually he was able to walk on his own.

Woods won the U.S. Open at Torrey Pines in 2008 with a double stress fracture and torn knee ligaments in his left leg. He made it back from a scandal in his personal life to become No. 1



Tiger Woods pauses while hitting on the driving range during practice before the Masters golf tournament, Sunday, April 3, 2022, in Augusta, Ga.

Associated Press

in the world again.

Nothing was more amazing than three years ago at Augusta National when he won a fifth green jacket after four back surgeries that made him fear he might

never walk again.

That he is even contemplating playing in this Masters is remarkable in its own right. If he can, questions are sure to shift to whether he can win. □

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creamy Garlic Tarragon Shrimp. You can also opt for a classic French Onion Soup, a Lobster Bisque or the famously Water's Edge House Wedge, a crisp wedge of fresh romaine lettuce topped with homemade blue cheese dressing, diced tomatoes, chopped bacon, caramelized pecans and blue cheese crumbles, drizzled with balsamic reduction. This followed by the Chef's special of seafood such as Fresh salmon filet seasoned and grilled, topped with lemon cilantro butter and served with homemade mashed potatoes and fresh asparagus, a nice plate of Ahi Tuna or a succulent pasta dish like the Florentina Fettuccine Alfredo. Meat Lovers will have their fix with choices of a devourable 22oz. Bone-In "Tomahawk" Rib-Eye, pan seared in garlic infused oil and finished in the oven or our juicy N.Y Strip Loin, seasoned & grilled. All our steaks options are seasoned with a blend of kosher salt and freshly cracked black pepper. Served with homemade mashed potatoes, seasoned vegetables and a choice of red wine reduction, green peppercorn demi glace, mushroom sauce, or bacon blue cheese butter. For extra sides the options are delectable. Fresh asparagus, seasonal vegetables, mashed or baked potatoes, fries or rice and beans. Combine

your personal choice with one of the most exclusive wine from the great selection of international wines to compliment your dish. Kids will enjoy every item of the specially compiled kids menu and there are also optional dishes for all vegans, vegetarians and gluten-free guests. To end the culinary voyage with some luscious sweetness, the desserts are wild. From a piece of coconut flan, NY cheese cake, carrot cake, chocolate brownie or our classic Tiramisu with kahlua and amaretto served with chocolate sauce and coffee jelly. Not to mention the fresh and light piece of key lime pie.

### Creating memories

If you are planning a birthday dinner, here you will receive a nice bottle of champagne to take home with you to extend your experience even further whether on the beach or your own private balcony.

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Just about every day of the week, there is a different live entertainment by the best local artists for you to enjoy. Whether you're in a romantic mood, or more in a swinging mood, there is absolutely a night especially for you where you can combine great music with delicious cocktails mixed with concoctions. In addition, Water's Edge offers three daily Happy Hours from 12pm-1pm, 4pm-6pm and again from 9pm-10pm with all premium brands specially priced.

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From the bottom of our hearts, we would like to Thank all of our guests who showed us so much love and support all through 2021, and hopefully will continue to do so in 2022. What we are most grateful for is that we could get back to doing what we love, which is looking after our guests. So, thank you for every dinner, lunch, breakfast, every to-go order, every glass of wine, every birthday, anniversary and date-night that you spent with us this last year. To our new guests, Welcome! We hope you to see you back soon! ☐



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